Reopening of closed tea gardens

2034. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

the number of tea gardens closed in the country;

whether these tea gardens were closed since the crisis over low tea prices in 2003;

if so, the details thereof;

whether there are over 30,000 tea garden employees facing great hardship due to prolonged closure;

if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by the Government to reopen the closed tea gardens; and

whether Tea Board of India has any proposal to take over these closed tea gardens?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) As on date 22 tea gardens remain closed in the country.

(b) and (c) During the crisis period from mid 1999 to 2004, as many as 139 tea gardens particularly that were financially weak, closed down. With the improvement in tea prices over the last two years, bulk of the gardens have reopened and as on date only 22 remain closed of which 13 are in West Bengal, 2 in Assam and 7 in Kerala.

(d) and (e) Due to continued closure of 22 gardens, about 23,000 plantation workers are affected.

(f) No, Sir.

Package for industries in Maharashtra

2035. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

whether Government has identified the industries where the growth rate is on decline;

if so, what measure are being taken to improve the situation; and

(c) is the Central Government devising any package for the benefit of States like Maharashtra where the industries are suffering due to several problems?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government has identified some group of industries where the growth rate is on decline as per enclosed statement *(See* below).

(b) The Government has put in place various policies to promote broad based industrial growth, which includes, *inter-alia,* delicensing of industrial capacity, liberalization of foreign trade regime to provide better access to inputs at competitive prices, rationalization and reduction of duty rates of customs and central excise, better infrastructure support, and liberal FDI regime, etc. In the Budget 2008-09, the Government has also reduced the excise duty across the board from 16% to 14%, reduction of excise duty from 16% to 12% for